

WHY CRIME DOES NOT PAY—

No. 8 of a Series of Extraordinary Revelations Written by SOPHIE LYONS

The Most Famous and Successful Criminal of Modern Times, Who Made a Million Dollars in Her Early Criminal Career and Lost It at Monte Carlo, and Has Now Accumulated Half a Million Dollars in Honorable Business Enterprises

Written by Sophie Lyons.

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THE bank robbers and other criminals whom I have been telling you about in these pages depended for the success of their crimes almost entirely upon their ingenuity. It was their brains against the combined brains of the banks and the police, and to carry out their dishonest ends they very rarely found it necessary to use violence.

It is quite true that most of these robbers were always heavily armed, but the weapons they carried were, as a rule, used only in the most desperate emergencies—when a well-aimed bullet was the only thing that could save their own lives and liberty. Men like Langdon Moore and many other successful burglars whom I have known positively refused to have anything to do with crimes where it was necessary to harm their victims or even to threaten them with violence.

But with train robbers it is quite different. Like the pirates who used to infest the seas, these desperadoes can accomplish nothing without first filling their victims with the fear of serious injury or death. The automatic revolver, the repeating rifle and the dynamite bomb are essential parts of their equipment and on the slightest provocation they stand ready to shoot to kill. Indeed, the train robber, in his eagerness to get his plunder, often shoots down helpless men and women when there is really no necessity for bloodshed.

In my previous articles I have shown that the biggest bank robbery ever accomplished was really an unprofitable undertaking; that the great and "successful" burglars lived to learn the lesson that a life of crime is not really profitable; that even those who, when caught, have managed to escape from prison, profited nothing. And to-day in the field of train robbery I shall prove to the readers of this page that here, again, the rule holds true that CRIME DOES NOT PAY!

Of course, there have been men clever enough to hold up trains without resorting to violence, but they are exceptional cases. The famous "Black Bart," the lone highwayman, was such a man. He boasted that the shotgun he carried on his exploits had never been loaded and that never in all his long criminal career had he taken a life or injured a human being.

This "Black Bart"—Charles Boles was his right name—was as romantic a character as any swashbuckling pirate of the story books. He was a well-educated man and had once had a prosperous business. Just how he happened to turn highwayman and train robber was a secret which he would never divulge.

A Lone Highwayman

"Black Bart" began his long career as a hold-up man in the days when the stage coaches used to carry large amounts of currency and gold dust over the mountain trails of the Far West. He always worked alone, but by a clever ruse which I will tell you about he led his victims to believe that he had several heavily armed accomplices to help him enforce his demands. The vein of humor which showed itself in everything he did extended even to the way he dressed himself up for his robberies. He invariably wore a long linen duster with a fute bag wrapped around his body like an Indian's blanket. A tall cone-shaped hat, such as clowns in the circus wear, completed a costume more outlandish than any ever seen outside a fancy dress ball.

"Black Bart" chose the scene for each of his robberies with the greatest care. His favorite spot was a sharp curve at the foot of a long hill where the road ran through a bit of forest or between high cliffs. A few yards from this point in the road but close enough to be plainly seen from the halted stage coach, the robber rigged the ingenious decoy by which he lured his victims into believing that he was not alone but had with him a considerable armed force.

With fute bags or pieces of tent canvas he built a screen about three feet high between two trees or two piles of rocks. The outside of this ambush he carefully masked with branches of trees and chunks of sod. Behind the ambush he stuck in the ground a half dozen sticks and on each stick he hung an old sombrero such as every cowboy and miner in those days wore. These hats showed above the ambush, just as they would have if six men were real men underneath them. Below each hat "Black Bart" stuck a piece of brown-stick painted black to give the semblance of rifle barrels.

It all looked very real and very formidable—for all the world as if six men were crouching there with rifles in hand ready to fire on the stage coach at the first sign of resistance.

When it came almost time for the coach to be due the lone highwayman would

climb to the top of a tree or a neighboring cliff and watch for its approach with the powerful field glasses he always carried. If there was any indication that the expected money bags were not on board or that its occupants were heavily armed, he would quickly dismantle his dummy ambush and lay it one side to wait for a more favorable time.

But if every thing looked all right, "Black Bart" clambered down and took up his position at the bend in the road where he could not be seen from the coach until it was almost upon him. He carried the shotgun, which he afterward said was never loaded, and behind him appeared the hats of his six dummy "confederates" with their menacing "rifle barrels."

"Hands up!" shouted the highwayman, stepping out into the road directly in front of the advancing horses and leveling his shotgun at the driver's head.

The driver tugged on the reins, jammed the brake down hard and the heavy vehicle came to a hurried stop. Everybody looked in amazement at the grotesque figure in the road—not quite sure whether to laugh or to cry.

But any hopes that it might all be a joke were quickly dispelled by the business-like way the highwayman handled his gun and by the meaning nod of his head in the direction of the sombrero and rifle barrels, which formed such a threatening background for this little drama. "Don't shoot until I give the word, boys," he calls over his shoulder to his supposed confederates—the scarecrow imitation bandits who looked very threatening in the bushes beside the road.

His Dummy Robbers

Whatever idea of resistance the driver or any one else on the stage might have had was immediately dropped at sight of the dummy desperadoes to whom "Black Bart" addressed this stern command.

"I'll have to trouble you to step out of that stage for a moment," says "Black Bart," with the courtesy for which he was famous.

As the men, women and children left the stage he ranged them in a long line by the roadside, directly in range of the ambush, directly in range of the sombrero and rifle barrels, which he pointed broomstick guns, significantly enough, kept the little group constantly covered.

From under his duster he produced a neat canvas bag. With this in one hand and his shotgun in the other, he passed along the line and gently but firmly relieved his victims of watches, pocketbooks, scarf pins and everything else of value.

This operation over, he would make the driver open the mail bags and the strong box in which the valuable shipments were carried.

From their contents he selected all the money and gold dust and stowed it away in his bag, which by this time was bulging with plunder.

"Now drive on," said "Black Bart," motioning his victims back to their places on the coach, "and if you value your lives don't look back. My men and I are dead shots and will hit at the first head we see looking around."

Anything that would take them out of the range of those guns was welcome to the frightened people on the coach. The driver would crack his whip and away the stage would roll at a great pace—with never a person bold enough to look back at the scene of the robbery.

In addition to his other accomplishments, "Black Bart" was something of a poet and evidently took a good deal of pride in his verses. Quite frequently, after robbing a stage coach, he would hand one of his victims a bit of paper on which were scrawled some of his rhymes.

Here is a "poem" which the driver of a Wells-Fargo stage received from "Black Bart" as a souvenir of the time when the highwayman robbed the strong box of \$6,000 in gold and diamonds:

"Here I lay me down to sleep,
To wait the coming morning—
Perhaps success, perhaps defeat
And everlasting sorrow.
Yet come what will—I'll try it on.
My condition can't be worse,
And if there's money in that stage,
Tis money in my purse."

"BLACK BART."
When railroads began to take the place of stage routes "Black Bart" proved to his satisfaction that the methods by which he had robbed so many stages single-handed and without taking a life, were equally well adapted for holding up trains.

Time and again fast express trains on the western roads would be stopped just at dusk in some lonely spot by the frantic waving of a red flag.

When the engineer jumped down to see what the trouble was he was confronted by "Black Bart," dressed as usual in the eccentric garb which distinguished him from every other train robber.

At the point of his shotgun the robber forced the engineer and fireman to uncouple the engine and run it a few hundred feet down the track.

By this time the passengers and trainmen were pouring out of the cars to learn the cause of the delay. "Black Bart" wasted few words on them. Nodding his

head significantly in the direction of the "riflemen," whose hats and "gun barrels" showed from the usual ambush at the side of the track, he said loud enough for all to hear:

"Don't fire unless I give the word, boys!"
The hint was quite sufficient. Convinced that they were at the mercy of a large band of desperate men, passengers, trainmen and express messengers quickly handed their valuables over to "Black Bart."

When he had secured all the plunder he could, he uttered his usual threat about not looking back on penalty of being shot at and allowed the train to move on.

"Black Bart" Is Caught

After eluding the police and express companies for years, "Black Bart" finally lost his nerve in a way that seemed strange in view of the coolness he had displayed on so many previous occasions.

He had held up a Southern Pacific train in the usual way. As he was packing the last of the plunder into his bag a farmer's boy came walking down a mountain trail toward the train.

The boy had been hunting and carried a rifle. He was innocent of any intention to interfere with "Black Bart"—in fact, had he had any idea that a train robbery was going on he would promptly have taken to his heels.

Strangely enough the sight of this lone boy with the rifle filled the train robber with the greatest alarm. Hurriedly throwing his bag of booty over his shoulder he started off in the opposite direction as fast as he could run.

The passengers and trainmen were dumfounded. Why should this robber run away when he had six armed men over them to protect him?

Just then a passing gust of wind blew two of the sombrero hats off the "heads" of "Black Bart's" dummies. That laid bare for the first time his clever ruse—the ruse which had enabled him to steal thousands of dollars from trains and stages single-handed!

The express messenger was the first of the victims to come to his senses. Seizing the rifle from the astonished farmer's boy, he fired several shots at the fleeing robber. But none of them took effect and "Black Bart" soon disappeared in the woods high up the mountain side.

Detectives who visited the scene of the robbery found that in his hurried flight, "Black Bart" had dropped the first clue to his identity that he had ever been able to find. It was a handkerchief, bearing in one corner the initial "B" and the mark of a San Francisco laundry.

A close watch was set in the vicinity of this laundry. When, a few weeks later, "Black Bart" left his lonely cabin in a wilderness of the Sierras and came to San Francisco to dispose of the proceeds of his latest robberies, he was promptly arrested. His senseless panic at the sight of the farmer's boy and his rifle had proved his undoing.

"Black Bart" pleaded guilty. At his trial he amused the court by relating how, frequently, on his visits to San Francisco, he had discussed his crimes with some of the very detectives who were searching for him.

After serving a long term in San Quentin prison, he reformed, and the last I



Sophie Lyons—the "Queen of the Burglars"

knew of him he was living honestly. All the money his crimes brought him had been gambled away and he was penniless when he left prison and had to struggle hard to make a living. For this daring and unusually lucky desperado surely crime did not pay.

"Old Bill" Miner was another famous train robber who generally worked alone and who, like "Black Bart," never posed as a bad man and never took human life. He was one of the first train robbers to operate on the Pacific Coast and is said to have originated the expression, "Hands up!"

Only a few years ago he figured in a daring series of robberies along the Canadian Pacific Railway. The crimes followed each other in rapid succession—hardly a week passed that this bold man did not hold up some fast train and make his escape with large sums in currency and gold dust.

The reward of \$15,000 which the Canadian Government offered for his capture seemed to have no terrors for Miner. One May evening, when the search for him was at its height, he stopped a fast train near Furrer, British Columbia, on almost the exact spot of one of his previous robberies.

At the point of his revolver, Miner forced the engineer to uncouple the combination mail and express car from the rest of the train and take it a mile or so down the track. As Miner knew, a heavy shipment of gold dust had been made on this train and he expected to make a rich haul.

But to his surprise, when he came to rifle the car, he found not one of the express company's strong boxes. The only thing of value the car contained was a small quantity of registered mail.

Women Train Robbers

The frequent robberies had made the express messenger apprehensive for the safety of his treasure. Just before reaching the point where Miner had waved his red lantern across the track he had taken the boxes of gold dust out of the express car and secreted them in a vacant stateroom in a sleeping car at the rear of the train.

Disgusted at his failure to find the gold dust where he had expected and fearing some trap if he attempted to search the rest of the train, Miner abandoned the robbery and fled.

But again he was to be fooled by the quick wits of this same express messenger. As the train robber jumped on his horse and rode away, the messenger climbed a telegraph pole, cut a wire and with an emergency key, flashed the news of the robbery to the nearest garrison of the Canadian Mounted Constabulary.

As a result, several armed posses were soon hot on Miner's trail. They surrounded him five days later and after a desperate gun fight, succeeded in making him a prisoner. He is now in a Canadian prison serving a life sentence—this was the sad reward of all his crimes.

I am thankful to say that I never had any inclination for this kind of crime and never assisted in holding up a train. The fact that I was a woman would not have prevented my doing this had I wished, for there have been many successful woman train robbers.

Etta Place was one of these. She was the recognized leader of the desperado

band known as the "Wild Bunch," whose operations for years terrorized the railroads of the West.

Yet, although I was never a train robber myself, I was the friend of many men and women who were active in this branch of crime, and the incidents I am giving you here are as they related them to me.

There was always a more or less close connection between train robbers and bank burglars, because they both usually had to face the problem of getting into safes. They frequently sought one another's advice as to the best means of breaking open some particularly refractory type of strong box.

Many bank burglars eventually took up the robbing of trains to gratify their craving for excitement and many men who had been train robbers in their early careers later became bank burglars.

In the latter class were like Marsh and Charley Bullard, who were associated with Mark Shilburn and my husband in some of their most famous attacks on the banks. One of their first successful crimes was the robbery of an express car on the New York Central Railroad of \$150,000 in cash and Government bonds.

This was an "inside" job—suggested by Putnam Brown, the messenger in charge of the express car which was robbed, and carried out with his assistance. Here is the ingenious way it was arranged.

Brown was to notify the robbers the night when an unusually large shipment of valuables would be made in his car from Buffalo to New York City. Bullard and Marsh would be waiting at Albany and when the train stopped there, Brown would open the door on the side of the car away from the station platform and admit them without detection.

Thieves' Clever Plan

Once inside the car the robbers would saw a hole in the door through which they had entered. This hole was just large enough for a man to reach his arm through and slide back the bolt on the inside of the door.

The purpose of this was to create the impression that the robbers had gained entrance to the car without the messenger's knowledge or consent—by climbing up on the side of the car and sawing through the door.

As soon as Brown had handed over to them the contents of the safe they were to blind and gag him and inflict several cuts on his face and hands to indicate the hard struggle he had made to protect his employer's property. He was also to chew on a small piece of soap to produce foam on his lips and thus add reality to his apparent sufferings.

As the train slowed down at some station in the outskirts of New York City, Bullard and Marsh would jump off and make their escape with the booty.

At the end of the route the messenger would be discovered lying helpless in the car—to all appearances almost dead. After he had been revived he would tell a story of the robbery that was carefully rehearsed in every detail with a view to deceiving the express company's detectives and the police. He was to lay particular stress on his descriptions of the robbers who had entered the car and attacked him—making them as little like the real Bullard and Marsh as anything well could be.

There was for various reasons a delay of several weeks before this crafty plan could be put into execution. When it finally was undertaken it went through without a hitch.

But Brown had, up to this time, been an honest man and this sudden plunge into crime began to trouble his conscience. His story of the robbery, at first entirely plausible, began to weaken under the persistent questioning of the detectives. Finally he gave so many conflicting versions of various points that he was placed under arrest for complicity in the crime.

Alarmed at this turn of affairs, Bullard and Marsh fled to Canada. They were caught there and the greater part of what they had stolen was recovered. I told you in a previous chapter how they broke out of the White Plains Jail—they were never recaptured.

Brown, the unfortunate messenger who had yielded to the temptation to get rich quick by stealing, was finally released on account of his previous good record. The experience taught him a valuable lesson and he never committed another crime.

A very extraordinary chapter in the history of train robbing is that which includes the crimes of Oliver Perry. His career was not of long duration, but it was marked by a diabolical ingenuity and a reckless disregard of his own life and the lives of others such as few men have ever shown. His crimes were all the more remarkable because they were not committed in some lonely region of the West, but in a thickly settled section of New York State.

Late one evening in the early Fall a sturdy, well built and well dressed young man walked through the New York Central yards at Albany. Several of the railroad's watchmen saw him, but he was such an intelligent, clean-cut looking fellow, and so evidently going about his business, that they took him for an employee and thought nothing strange of his being there at that hour.

At the station a limited express train stood ready to start on its trip westward.

The train consisted of an express directly behind the engine, and that a baggage car and a long sleepers and day coaches.

The athletic young man approached station just as the train was getting started. With the ease of an experienced man he grasped the railing on the platform of the express car as it moved, and swung himself on board.

This young man who crouched in the shadows of the platform until the lighted Albany yards had been seen was Oliver Perry. Having made poor success of burglary and several prison sentences, he was now to try his hand at train robbery.

The express car as I have said, first car in the train. Its front solid panel of meal and wood—curly locked.

The front half of the car was filled with a miscellaneous assortment of barrels and other freight, making a pile from the floor to within a few feet of the ceiling. In the rear half of the car were two safes and a desk at which a solitary express messenger was sorting way bills.

The train was about forty miles from Albany when, above the clatter of wheels, the messenger thought he voice.

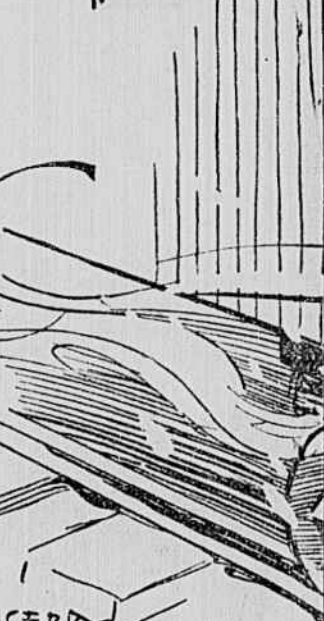
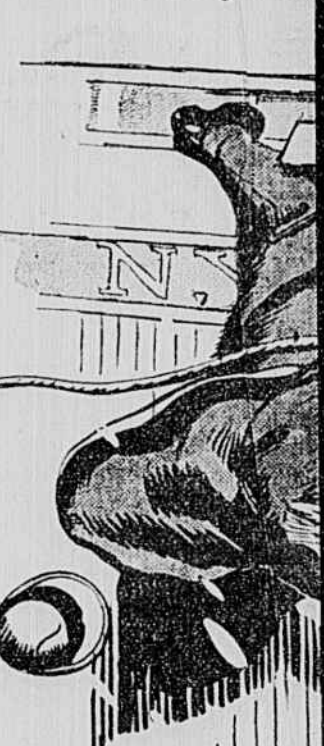
"Hands up!" was what he heard—but how absurd.

He was not a nervous man and sure that he was all alone in the train, he thought his imagination and the train must have deceived him out even raising his head he went his work.

But again the voice sounded. It was unmistakable, and to the command there was something added. "Hands up," it said, "or I'll blow your head off!"

Looking up, the astonished messenger saw Perry's ugly face leering at him.

Oliver Perry's Deed



Perry lay flat on his stomach half suffocated by the smoke of death at every motion of himself along to a steel vein. Fastening one end of a long waist. He gripped the rope himself cautiously down the only a man of almost super attempt. Hanging in midair hand and smashed the glass. "Open that door or I'll kill you!" the astonished express would stop the train, but then, reaching his hand to the door open and swung him